

Grant could lead to renovated Front Street

April 9, 2022



The city of Crescent City seeks to partner with the Elk Valley Rancheria on a joint application to seek \$11.5 million to make further improvements along Front Street between I Street and U.S. Highway 101 and the Battery Point Lighthouse area.

The city's proposal would reduce Front Street from "an underutilized four-lane roadway to an attractive, two-lane roadway with pedestrian and bicycle improvements, cultural interpretive signage, off-street parking, local art, safe connections to recreation and native landscaping," according to a staff report prepared by City Manager Eric Wier and City Grants and Economic Development Coordinator Bridget Lacey.

The proposed project will supplement earlier improvements that were completed last year that transformed Front Street between B Street and G Street, adjacent to the Beachfront Park.

The grant proposal is also intended to also to improve the public streets surrounding the Ocean Front Lodge at 101 A Street, and the California Coastal Trail bicycle and hiking path at Battery Point Lighthouse Park.

The funding, available under the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity grant program, was created to provide \$2.275 billion of federal infrastructure funding to improve surface transportation infrastructure projects that will have a significant local or regional impact.

The city expects the Front Street Complete Street and Cultural Inclusion Project, or “Front Street Project” for short, to have a “significant impact on the economy and livelihood of Crescent City residents, as well as for tourists and residents of the Northern California Coast.”

The project will include the following specific improvements:

- Narrowing Front Street (between I Street and US 101) from four lanes to an attractive, landscaped, two-lane street that will invite walking and biking through the installation of new sidewalks and bicycle lane striping. Roughly 20,500 square feet of new sidewalk with 2,500 linear feet of curb and gutter will be constructed.
- Paving critical storm water, water main, and sewer infrastructure improvements on A Street, Second Street, and B Street that connect directly to Front Street.

On Front Street that will include the installation of a 48-inch high density poly-ethylene storm drain pipe from I Street to U.S. Highway 101, replacement of a failing CMP storm drain as needed and tying into existing drainage at K Street from Front to Second Street.

- Making improvements according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that include 27 access ramps throughout the Front Street project.
- Constructing sidewalk (16,500 square feet) as well as curb and gutter (1,650 linear feet) infrastructure along A Street, Second Street, and B Street.
- Posting of cultural, historical, and interpretive signage, as well as sidewalk (12500 square feet), curb, and gutter (totaling 750 linear feet) construction along Lighthouse Way—thereby connecting to Battery Point Lighthouse trail, the Taa-‘atdvn Village Site, and the California Coastal Trail.
- Developing intermodal/multimodal infrastructure that includes bike lanes and walking paths leading to the public transit hub at the east end of the project area. In addition, the development of a separated waiting area and information kiosk for transit passengers.
- Establishing a tsunami evacuation route road marking and public address warning system.

The city must submit an application defining the project scope, budget, timeline, and objectives by April 14, 2022. Award announcements will be made August 12, 2022.

Fully executed grant agreements and environmental approvals must be completed by September 30, 2026, with project expenditure completed by September 30, 2031.

There is only one tiny catch according to the staff report. The RAISE grant is awarded on a reimbursable basis, so the city will need to pay the project costs upfront, and then request reimbursement from the funding agency.

The report further states that “the city is already involved in several other large projects, and the cash flow for all projects needs to be considered as a whole. The timing of each project and when it is reimbursed will

impact the city's ability to cash flow the projects.”

Possible cash flow remedies include inter-fund borrowing, external borrowing, adjusting project timing, or other options. The RAISE grant includes a retention requirement. The Department of Transportation will withhold five percent of the reimbursements for a period of three years, which means the city will be waiting for \$575,000 to be reimbursed for three years after the project closeout.

So far, the city has received, or has now applied for, grants totaling nearly \$19 million. This investment already has and will continue to improve Front Street as the gateway to Crescent City. Part of the grant proposal includes construction of a gateway arch over the entire width of Front Street that will greet visitors as they enter the park area or proceed further to the Battery Point Lighthouse.

While there is no guarantee that the city will be awarded a grant, the “extremely competitive” grant process might favor Crescent City because of the successful completion of earlier grant projects along Front Street.

According to Wier, a recent Crescent City grant application was “one of few applicants in California that was highly recommended.” This may be a “tie-breaker” when it comes down to a final decision.